

**NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION'S
REVISED ENVIRONMENTAL AND HISTORIC
PRESERVATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
(DRAFT)**

**INFORMATION PRESENTATION
JANUARY 8, 2004**

The National Capital Planning Commission is preparing to adopt revised environmental and historic preservation policies and procedures as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106).

The Commission will hear an information presentation on the draft policies and procedures at the January 8, 2004 Commission meeting. Copies of the draft will be available for review on NCPC's website and upon request, starting December 29, 2003. The public is invited to provide written comments on the draft documents through January 21, 2004 and is invited to comment during NCPC's February 5, 2004 Commission meeting, at which time the Commission will be asked to adopt the policies.

In drafting the revised policies and procedures, NCPC consulted with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and took into consideration valuable input from members of the public who provided testimony and written comments early in the review process. In addition, NCPC considered the recommendations of the CEQ's September 2003 NEPA Task Force report "Modernizing NEPA Implementation."

The draft policies and procedures update and clarify NCPC's existing environmental and historic preservation policies and procedures in the following significant areas:

A. Project and Master Plan Approvals: NEPA & Section 106 Requirements For Applicants

One of NCPC's primary responsibilities is to approve the master plans and project plans for federal and city agencies in the District of Columbia. In those instances, NCPC satisfies its NEPA and Section 106 responsibilities by requiring applicant agencies to complete certain levels of NEPA and Section 106 documentation *before* submitting a master plan or project to NCPC for approval. The draft policies also require agencies seeking the approval of a master plan to have completed *all* NEPA and Section 106 requirements in advance of submitting a master plan for NCPC's approval. Similarly, before submitting an application for approval of a preliminary project design, agencies will be required to complete NEPA (i.e. produced a final Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement), initiate Section 106 with the State Historic Preservation Officer, and to make an assessment of the proposed project's effect on historic properties. Section 106 compliance must then be completed before applying for final design approval.

B. Scoping Requirement

NCPC's draft policies and procedures will require that federal and District of Columbia agencies seeking NCPC's approval engage in a clearly articulated process of scoping before preparing its NEPA documents. In accordance with CEQ's regulations, NCPC is defining scoping as an early and open process to determine the scope and significant issues that should be addressed in assessing a proposed action.

C. Expanded Public Participation Requirements

The open and early participation of the public is an integral and vital part of the NEPA and Section 106 processes. Therefore, the draft policies and procedures require public participation, as practicable, at all relevant stages of the NEPA and Section 106 compliance processes, including the scoping process, the consideration of alternatives, and during the review of NEPA Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements.

D. Integration, NEPA, and Section 106

NCPC'S draft policies incorporate the Advisory Council's and CEQ's policy direction (and NCPC's existing practice) that federal agencies integrate as much as possible the scoping, public participation, and consultation processes of NEPA and Section 106. This integration of the two processes must be reflected in the NEPA Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements submitted to NCPC by applicants.

E. Revised Categorical Exclusions

Categorical exclusions are categories of actions that a federal agency determines generally will not, individually or cumulatively, have a significant effect on the environment. For these categories of action, further NEPA compliance will not be required. NCPC's draft policies and procedures revise and update NCPC's list of categorical exclusions and provide clear and limited criteria for defining additional actions as categorical exclusions.

Copies of the draft policies and procedures will be available on December 29, 2003. To obtain a copy, the public is invited to go to NCPC's website, www.ncpc.gov, or contact Mr. Eugene Keller, NCPC's Environmental Officer at 202-482-7200 or by e-mail at gene.keller@ncpc.gov. Written comments on the draft policies and procedures should be sent by January 21, 2004 to the attention of Mr. Keller by e-mail, regular mail or fax at 202-482-7272. NCPC is located at 401 9th Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20576.